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POLICY

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

27 MAR 1981

In reply refer to:
I-21049

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Visit of Horst Ehmke with the Deputy Secretary of Defense,
25 March 1981 (U)

(U) Horst Ehmke, a member of the FRG Bundestag and Deputy Chairman of the SPD Caucus, visited DepSecDef in his office on 25 March 1981, from 1000 to 1100. The following major topics were discussed:

(S) Defense Efforts: DepSecDef said that at a time when the US is cutting social programs and increasing defense spending Congressional backlash could occur if the Allies do not increase their defense efforts. Congress would ask if social programs were more sacrosanct in Europe than in the US. A Mansfield-type attitude could result. Mr. Ehmke referred to the increasing cost of procuring advanced weapons systems like the Tornado, suggesting the FRG might not be able to see Tornado through but in any event would have to buy from the US in the future. The ROLAND and anti-tank program would be delayed. Manpower would also become a problem in the late 1980s. He asked what the US would like Germany to do under the division of labor. DepSecDef said first priority should go to NATO. The Carter Administration had spoken of filling the gap created by US efforts in Southwest Asia (SWA), but the US has not reached the stage of being able to quantify the gap. The Reagan Administration has a different approach, one calling for the Allies, without detracting from Central Region efforts, to be more active in Southwest Asia. He specifically referred to maritime cooperation in SWA, observing that German ships would add to firepower and force structure.

(S) Southwest Asia: DepSecDef said that SWA would be the most likely area of confrontation with the Soviets. The Soviets have 27 divisions available without degrading the NATO and PRC fronts. The US would be hard pressed to stop the Soviets with 2 divisions deployed under the RDJTF concept. Some in SWA opposed US bases in the area, and others wanted to feel US presence, although not necessarily wanting US forces on the ground. The more multi-lateral the security effort in SWA, the easier for the Arab states to accept Western presence and the greater the Western capability. Mr. Ehmke said German participation would be difficult: there was no history of German involvement in the area; it made no sense to send one FRG ship to SWA; and there were constitutional restrictions. DepSecDef asked if there were other ways the Germans could be helpful, noting that Germany depended on Middle East oil more than did the US. Mr. Ehmke suggested the Germans might do more in Turkey and provide enroute access through the FRG. He noted that

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France and the UK were active in SWA and said all do not have to do the same for defense. Proposals for German naval involvement in SWA would lead to a large domestic fight. The Germans can do something more on the Central Front. The FRG could also do more with additional ships for maritime security in the Baltic, North Sea, and shipping lanes in the North Atlantic.

(S) Negotiations with the Soviets: Mr. Ehmke said he thought the US defense budget increases had made an impression on the USSR. DepSecDef replied that the best way to move to negotiation is to show determination. Mr. Ehmke said he thought the US was scaring the Soviets. Some Europeans were expressing fear the US would forget about negotiations. Mr. Ehmke expressed hope that the Germans could turn the tide on defense spending but said there would be no large jump like in the US. The Germans would not necessarily agree with the US, but they would have to do something on defense. He expressed fear of escalated debate across the Atlantic. DepSecDef assured Mr. Ehmke the US did not want polemics. He said that from his previous position at CIA he had become convinced that the West will be highly vulnerable to Soviet blackmail unless there is a turn around in strategic, TNF, and conventional defense trends. Leaders needed to explain the Soviet threat. Mr. Ehmke noted that Soviet intervention in Poland would change everything. DepSecDef said intervention could occur today. Both agreed Polish intervention was a high price which hopefully would not have to be paid.

(S) TNF: Mr. Ehmke said time was passing and that a key point would be the SPD Party Conference in spring of 1982. SPD support had been necessary for the December 1979 NATO agreement on TNF, and that continued SPD support was crucial. The Dutch were lost; the Belgians and Italians would do what the FRG does; the German position depends on the SPD. He asked whether it would be possible to table a TNF arms control proposal in the fall of 1981, telling the Soviets to take it or leave it and saying that if they do not take it, NATO will go ahead with TNF deployment. He hoped the Soviets would take it, but if they did not, NATO would start deploying on schedule modernized TNF systems. DepSecDef said much would depend on the substance of the offer. It was unlikely the Soviets would take it or leave it; they like to negotiate. Mr. Ehmke said NATO has to prove that it was serious about negotiations. Some believe negotiation was only a figleaf. The Church had been active and was suggesting that a Christian should not touch nuclear weapons. He noted that German bishops had visited the State Department and reportedly made an impression. DepSecDef wondered how they would feel to be in Poland now.

(C) DepSecDef concluded that there was nothing more important than a dialogue with the FRG and expressed his desire for the Germans to tell us what they should do for the common defense, noting that the Administration would be under pressure in Congress to show common commitment to defense.

GEORGE W. BADER
Deputy Director
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